



# Ponheary Ly Foundation

## Srayang Student Scholarship Proposal





## Content:

In the villages surrounding the ancient temples of Koh Ker, the community is split between former Khmer Rouge soldiers, villagers who spent a decade in hiding during the civil war, and migrants from near the Tonle Sap Lake. The majority of parents have little or no education, and when we first entered their community their views on education were “We’ll allow it, but we won’t support it”. They are a fragile community, most of them struggling with high levels of post-traumatic stress and supporting themselves by subsistence farming.

There was no school in Koh Ker Village until 2004 when a Japanese NGO built a small school building and then left. When Ponheary first discovered this building in 2006, there were 41 students scratching the alphabet in the dirt under the guidance of a woman with a Grade 3 education. It took six years from the first day PLF got involved at Koh Ker Primary School until the day we had Grade 6 graduates, all of them with dreams of continuing on to Secondary School to study in Grade 7. Of course, when the nearest secondary school is 20km away, this is easier said than done. So we found a piece of land directly across from the Secondary School in Srayang and bought it. That first teacher, Sieng Ry, became the house mother for the first-ever class of Grade 7 students from Koh Ker Village and so the Srayang Dormitory came to be.







## About the Dorm

The dormitory currently houses 12-16-year-old students studying in Grades 7-9 at the Srayang government Secondary School. They are all graduates of Koh Ker Primary School and Romchek Primary School, which PLF began supporting in 2016. The students are under the fastidious care of a house mother and field director and have their own respective living quarters for boys and girls. They also receive additional classes in English, science, math, and workshops in an effort to supplement the government curriculum. Each student is responsible for playing an active role in household duties around the dorm such as preparing dinner, chopping firewood, and keeping the grounds clean. In order to be accepted into the dorm, students must pass the national government exam, an entrance exam administered by PLF, and be interviewed along with members of their family.

The dorm serves as an important milestone. These students are spending their formative years in an environment that is free from food insecurity, alcohol and drugs, violence, and abuse, many of them for the first time in their lives. They are among peers who are committed to the same goal of receiving an education, and their value of education is immeasurably higher than that of the generation before. For students who are in their early teens it is also a step of independence, but one that is close enough to be able to return home on weekends to spend time with family and assist them during the planting and harvest seasons. Their time spent at the dorm falls at a period of great physical and emotional development in one's life, and we see every 9th grader who graduates from the dorm carry themselves with a sense of agency that the 7th graders haven't yet discovered within themselves.

It would be an enormous leap to send a student from Grade 6 to Siem Reap to continue their studies. Allowing them three years in Srayang provides enough space for each student to grow, and enough time for us to see which ones have the grit to continue. It's a stepping stone, providing enough solid ground for students to stand on for when they do make the leap onward.

---





## What's in a scholarship?

A uniform and school supplies, three meals per day, supplementary courses in English, Khmer, Mathematics, Science, and IT, workshops, toiletries, a bundle of residential necessities such as a blanket and laundry basket, basic medical care as needed, and a trip to the dentist upon intake.

A safe space, a support system, stability, freedom from violence, food insecurity, drugs, and alcohol, peers who are striving to reach the same educational goals, a house mother and house father who listen and respond to each student's needs, and the ability to both imagine and realize their dreams.

Every student who is accepted into the dorm and can pass the Grade 9 exam at the end of Secondary School has the opportunity to continue their studies, either in High School or vocational training.





In 2012, one young woman at the dormitory became the **first student from Koh Ker village** to ever graduate from Secondary School in Srayang. She is now the librarian at Koh Ker Primary School.



In 2014, four students graduated from Secondary School and continued on to Siem Reap to study in **vocational training** schools. Three have since joined the workforce; two as **chefs** and a motorbike technician. The fourth completed her training and is now pursuing her High School degree to become a teacher.



In 2017, Channy, the first ever Srayang graduate to **continue studying beyond Secondary School** graduated from High School in Siem Reap. She is now studying Law at the Royal University of Law and Economics in Phnom Penh. That same year, an entire graduating class from the Srayang Dorm **continued on to the dormitories** in Siem Reap to enroll in High School.



Today, nine students from Srayang are living in our dormitories in Siem Reap and are enrolled in High School. **They are all in the top half of their class**, and three of them ranked in the top ten out of more than 60 students.

A photograph of two students, a boy in a red shirt and a girl in a black shirt, standing in front of a large chalkboard. The boy is writing on the board with his right hand. The chalkboard has several lines of text written on it in both Khmer and English. The top line reads 'ក្ដីប្រថាប់បង្អង់ស្រី: (My dream is...)' in white chalk. Below this, there are several lines of text, including 'ស្រីវិទ្យាសាស្ត្រ (Scientist)', 'ស្រីគ្រូ (Teacher)', and 'ស្រីគ្រូ (Teacher)'. The background is a dark, textured wall.

ក្ដីប្រថាប់បង្អង់ស្រី: (My dream is...)

It costs \$650 to fund one student for one year of schooling at the Srayang Dormitory.

Students from areas like Koh Ker and Romchek are born into a society that is miles upstream from those living in cities. They make up the forgotten population of those living in rural Cambodia, the 80% of Cambodians whose numbers get skipped over because there simply aren't enough services in place to care for those who are living the way their ancestors did: as subsistence farmers. There are now 103 students who have reached Secondary School over the course of the 7 years we have had the dormitory in operation, and step by step those students are blazing a path from the village all the way to University.

With your help, there will be even more footsteps to guide the way.

*Lori Carlson*

Lori Carlson  
President  
[Lori@theplf.org](mailto:Lori@theplf.org)

